DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 459 HE 020 441

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TITLE The Role of Assessment in the Private Institutions in Minnesota.
PUB DATE Feb 87
NOTE 32p.; For related document, see HE 020 443. Paper collected as part of the American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum. Tables in appendices contain small print.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Deans; Accountability; *Administrator Attitudes; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Quality; Evaluation Utilization; Higher Education; Improvement Programs; Information Needs; Institutional Research; *Private Colleges; Questionnaires
IDENTIFIERS *AAHE Assessment Forum; *Minnesota

ABSTRACT

Views of academic deans at 15 private Minnesota colleges concerning assessment were surveyed. About half of the colleges experienced some but not great pressure for assessment from their external environment while the remaining had felt essentially no pressure. The deans identified obstacles to assessment, including fears about possible intrusion of assessment on teaching and learning and misuse of assessment results, and fears related to limited resources of time, money, and technology. Assessment instruments and funding appeared as areas of needed assistance. A majority of the colleges had availed themselves of the opportunity to learn more about assessment through conferences devoted entirely to assessment. Regarding the appropriate role of assessment, there were some differences between the use of assessment for accountability versus improvement and development. Although differences were not large, there was a tendency to favor assessment for improvement and development purposes over accountability. A second questionnaire was sent to institutional research personnel to determine the types of assessment information collected by the college. Appended are the questionnaires, which used some items from an American Council on Education survey. (SW)

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THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN THE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN MINNESOTA

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The Role of Assessment in the Private Institutions in Minnesota

Burton Clark (1985) observed that the American school system is characterized by downward coupling, i.e., the genetic imprint at each level is determined by the next lower level. This theory seems to be supported by the pattern in recent years of the public's analysis and questioning of its educational system. Questions of accountability were first raised in the context of elementary and secondary education, and more recently have focussed on higher education. The public is expressing uncertainty about the worth of higher education and is asking institutions to demonstrate their educational effectiveness.

Role of Assessment

Assessment has come to the forefront through this national attention on accountability and quality in higher education. It is viewed as a means for improving and verifying quality and, as such, promotes accountability in higher education.

The term assessment has been used loosely to mean the gathering of information to indicate the extent to which an institution is achieving what it purports to do. That is, to what extent are teaching and learning occurring at the institution? Are students growing in the intended dimensions as expressed in the institution's mission and reflected in the curriculum?

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National Context

Questions of quality and the role of assessment in improvement of quality have been the foci of many national reports within the last two years, e.g., the National Institute of Education's "Involvement in Learning" (1984), addressed student involvement, and advocated the setting of high expectations for students and systematic assessment; the Association of American Colleges' "Integrity in the College Curriculum" (1985) addressed the absence of accountability and proposed appropriate techniques for measuring student progress; the Southern Regional Education Board's "Access to Quality Undergraduate Education" (1986) concerned the maintenance of access, improving quality and the need for measures of student performance. The more recent report of the Education Commission of the States, "Transforming the State Role in Undergraduate Education" (1986), identified the challenges including assessment, and recommended direction to state leaders.

As might be expected, demands for accountability have been met in a variety of ways reflecting the diversity of institutions and their contexts. A few institutions have implemented comprehensive student assessment programs through their own initiative. In some instances, state legislation has imposed assessment standards. A recent article by Boyer and McGuiness, Jr. (1986) provided an excellent overview of current state initiatives to improve the quality of undergraduate education. Some programs are based largely on national baselines(e.g., G.R.E.) or value added measures, i.e., the difference in the

measurement of a particular dimension at the beginning and at the end of students' four years to determine the value added by the educational experience. Other institutions have implemented rising junior exams or have assessment programs based on developmental mastery of successively higher generic and specialized skills. These examples include components of the highly publicized assessment programs of Northeast Missouri State, the U. of Tennessee, Alverno College, Florida and Georgia.

To put these developments into perspective, it is important to understand the context of these highly publicized assessment programs. The earliest and most intrusive assessment programs appear to have occurred at institutions in which quality was clearly becoming a problem and threat to the institution. Unfortunately, this author has been able to locate only one article acknowledging the importance of context in assessment, an article by Mingle (1985). He attributed the current intervention into areas traditionally reserved for faculty and institutions to several factors including the inability of institutions to maintain standards and provide expanded access simultaneously, the loss of confidence in grading practices of faculty, the failure of high schools to teach basic computation and communication skills, and the desire to extend successful "school-type" reforms to colleges and universities. It would seem reasonable to add the factor of financial crisis experienced in some states. These factors identified above do seem to be present in those states in which intervention has occurred.

Context of Private Institutions

Given the context of quality and assessment in higher education in general, as discussed above, there is the question about the role that the issues of quality play in the institutions and states in a context relatively free from or less encumbered by factors identified by Mingle. More specifically, what is the role of assessment in private colleges in a state such as Minnesota where such institutions are free of direct legislative intervention; free of open enrollment with its concomitant effects, some of which were factors cited by Mingle; and are among the beneficiaries of a strong secondary public school system. The literature cited earlier provides no information about institutions in such a context.

It appears unlikely that such institutions are without pressures from their external environment. The trend for a more active role of trustees in decision making regarding quality and assessment is evident from the increased activity of state and national boards of trustees as reported in The Chronicle (1985). This seems only logical. The quality of an institution is the legal responsibility of boards of trustees and one way of fulfilling that responsibility is to insist that an institution evaluate itself. This has occurred at the author's institution where the President and the faculty observer have reported a new high level of interest and questioning in this area on the part of the trustees. It is not that the trustees are questioning the quality of the product as much as whether or not assessment activity is taking place.

Ted Marchese indicated that the pressure for assessment is felt by even the most prestigious institutions (1986). He reported that an Eastern consortium of highly prestigious, elite institutions have concluded that assessment of quality is necessary for their maintenance of very high quality. With the current climate, those elite institutions felt they needed specific information about their success in order to continue to attract capable students.

Two national studies completed by the American Council on Education (Feb. 1986, August 1986) provided information about the role of assessment in various types of institutions. Some of the general findings included the following: the national education-reform reports had been widely discussed among senior administrators and faculty members; about 22% of the academic officers polled reported that their colleges had already changed their research and assessment programs as a result of the reform movement, and an additional 29% reported that they were planning to do so.

The Problem

These ACE study results were reported by institutional categories of 2-year, 4-year and universities. However, the trends of 4-year institutions clearly cannot be projected to private colleges. It was these results that lead this author to question whether or not the trends were representative of the private liberal arts institution in a context generally free of the educational constraints identified earlier.

The questions addressed in this project included some that had been explored in the research of the American Council on Education (ACE). Some of the ACE questionnaire items were repeated verbatim in this questionnaire to provide comparable data. Additional questions were designed to provide more complete, illuminative information about the role of assessment in these institutions. The general questions addressed include: To what extent have assessment and quality discussions and establishment of committees and/or assessment plans taken place? What conditions exist at the institutions that might affect assessment activity and use, e.g., attitudes, expertise, awareness, funds? To what extent are these conditions perceived as possible barriers to assessment activity? What type of assistance, if any, from other institutions, the state legislature, college consortiums might be helpful? What role should assessment play? Would an accountability assessment program be valuable to institutions; would a development/improvement assessment program be valuable to the institutions? What types of assessment information is gathered and for what purpose? Thus, the purpose of the survey was to provide a very general overview of current attitudes, practices and perceived barriers to assessment in these private institutions.

Research Procedures

The seventeen private institutions of higher education in Minnesota were included in the survey. Each institution's Academic Dean was asked to complete and return by mail

Questionnaire A, which addressed all questions identified above except the questions about specific information collected by the institution.

Questionnaire B contained items regarding specific information gathered at the institution and the purpose of gathering the information. The Academic Dean was asked to forward Questionnaire B to the person at the institution who conducted institutional research activity. A few weeks after the initial mailing, a second mailing was completed to nonrespondents. Subsequently, telephone calls were made to most of the institutions returning the questionnaires for clarification of particular items and to respond to questions.

Of the 17 private institutions in Minnesota, responses to Questionnaire A were received from the Academic Deans of 15 institutions, a response rate of 88%. The return rate for Questionnaire B was 82%. The exact wording of items and the results of Questionnaires A and B can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

Results

Discussion about Assessment

There were indications that issues of assessment and quality of education have been discussed widely - among senior administrators in all institutions; in institutional faculty meetings in most institutions; and in all but two institutions, there have been discussions with members of the board. One-half of the institutions reported that institutional meetings had been commenced for discussion of these issues. During the last two

years, nine of the fifteen institutions have established a new task force or committee, or assigned an existing committee to address the issues of assessment and quality of undergraduate education.

Telephone follow-up interviews revealed that the objects of the assessments varied considerably from a specific program, e.g., a new program to the overall institutional program as defined by an institution's mission and goals. This tends to weaken the conclusions drawn by the ACE researchers that assessment activity reported could be interpreted as overall institutional accountability assessment rather than assessment of components of the institution. However, this survey indicated a high level of discussion about quality and assessment in these institutions regardless of the scope of the assessment.

Climate for and Obstacles to Assessment

Some questionnaire items related to the climate for assessment at the institutions. Several possible institutional conditions were listed in the survey. The Academic Deans were first asked to indicate to what extent the conditions existed at their institutions and secondly, given that condition, to what extent it served as an obstacle to establishing or using an assessment program at their institution (see table 1).

Indications of general awareness and support can be found in items a, b and f, g respectively. Awareness and support seemed quite high on the part of administrators and therefore was not reported as perceived obstacles at many institutions. About 63% of the institutions indicated "much" or "extensive" awareness of

Table 1

EXISTANCE OF AND EXTENT TO WHICH CONDITIONS SERVE AS OBSTACLES

Condition		Extent of Condition at Institution					Condition as an Obstacle to Assessment at Institution		
		Essentially not at all	A little	Some-what	Much	Exten-sive	Not an obstacle	Minor obstacle	Major obstacl
a. Awareness of assessment issues on the part of key administrators.	n	-	-	5	5	5	12	2	-
	col	-	-	33%	33%	33%	86%	14%	-
b. Awareness of assessment issues on the part of key faculty/faculty committees.	n	-	-	5	6	4	9	5	-
	col	-	-	33%	40%	27%	64%	36%	-
c. Pressure from the external environment (public, board members/regents, etc.) for assessment.	n	7	2	4	1	1	13	1	-
	col	47%	13%	27%	7%	7%	93%	7%	-
d. A clear sense of how to begin an assessment program.	n	-	1	6	4	4	7	7	-
	col	-	7%	40%	27%	27%	50%	50%	-
e. A clear sense of what to evaluate.	n	-	-	7	5	3	6	8	-
	col	-	-	47%	33%	20%	43%	57%	-
	ACE						29%	35%	36%
f. General administrative support of the concept of assessment.	n	-	-	2	7	6	14	-	-
	col	-	-	13%	47%	40%	[illegible]	-	-
	ACE						68%	23%	9%
g. General faculty support of the concept of assessment.	n	-	-	9	5	1	7	6	-
	col	-	-	60%	33%	7%	[illegible]	46%	-
	ACE						34%	40%	26%
h. A perception that students would be unhappy with new forms of assessment.	n	7	3	4	-	-	8	6	-
	col	50%	21%	29%	-	-	57%	43%	-
	ACE						47%	49%	4%
i. Fear about possible intrusion of assessment on teaching/learning activities.	n	2	6	5	2	-	4	8	2
	col	13%	40%	33%	13%	-	29%	57%	14%
j. The opinion that assessment may be inappropriate for the insitution's curriculum.	n	8	3	4	-	-	9	4	-
	col	53%	20%	27%	-	-	69%	31%	-
	ACE						62%	33%	5%
k. Fear about misuse of assessment results.	n	4	5	5	1	-	5	6	2
	col	27%	33%	33%	7%	-	[illegible]	46%	15%
	ACE						42%	37%	21%
l. Perceived inadequacy of available evaluation instruments.	n	-	3	6	5	1	-	7	7
	col	-	20%	40%	33%	7%	[illegible]	50%	50%
	ACE						39%	38%	23%
m. Availability of sufficient funds to develop assessment program.	n	4	3	5	2	1	5	4	4
	col	27%	20%	33%	13%	7%	[illegible]	31%	31%
	ACE						20%	33%	47%
n. Expertise at institution to develop assessment procedures.	n	-	-	3	9	3	9	5	-
	col	-	-	20%	60%	20%	64%	36%	-
	ACE						68%	23%	9%
o. Expertise at institution to assist in interpreting and utilizing results.	n	-	2	2	8	3	10	4	-
	col	-	13%	13%	53%	20%	71%	29%	-
p. A perception that assessment would add to an already heavy workload for staff.	n	1	6	3	2	3	1	7	6
	col	7%	40%	20%	13%	20%	7%	50%	43%

assessment issues on the part of administrators and 87% indicated a similar high level of support for assessment by administrators. Administrative awareness was not perceived as an obstacle by 86% of the institutions, while none perceived administrative support to be an obstacle.

There was an indication, however, that there might be somewhat less support among faculty than administrators. The level of faculty support was viewed as an obstacle at 46% of the institutions, while the level of administrative support was viewed as an obstacle at none of the institutions. Nevertheless, faculty support for assessment at Minnesota private institutions was perceived to be much greater than that reported by the 4-year institutions in the ACE survey. In that survey 66% of the institutions felt faculty support was an obstacle to assessment.

The Academic Deans were asked to indicate to what extent their institution had experienced pressure from the external environment for assessment (see item c, table 1). About one-half, 47%, reported experiencing essentially no pressure for assessment from the external environment. As indicated in Table 1, the remaining institutions reported a wide range of experiences in the level of pressure.

Reports of the institutions' sense of how to begin an assessment program, a sense of what to evaluate and the presence of expertise at the institution can be found in the results of items d, e, n, and o on Table 1. Having a clear sense of how to evaluate, and what to evaluate were perceived by about one-half of the respondents as being minor obstacles, while none indicated

they were major obstacles. This was in sharp contrast to the figures for 4-year institutions from the ACE study which indicated that 36% perceived a sense of what to evaluate was a major obstacle and 35% perceived it to be a minor obstacle.

Conditions that were perceived to serve as the greatest obstacles to assessment for the private institutions and the percent indicating they were a major obstacle were as follows: fear about possible intrusion of assessment on teaching and learning activities (14%), fear about misuse of assessment (15%), availability of sufficient funds to develop assessment programs (31%), a perception that assessment would add to an already heavy workload for staff (43%), and a perceived inadequacy of available evaluation instruments (50%).

The above areas perceived as major barriers for this group of private institutions were, however, perceived as even greater obstacles by ACE's national sample of 4-year institutions. This was true regarding all perceived barriers except the concern for availability of adequate instruments. This was perceived as a major obstacle to 50% of the Minnesota private institutions and only 23% of the 4-year institutions in the ACE survey. This may represent a greater awareness on the part of Minnesota private institutions about the possible inappropriateness of standardized tests for their curriculum and/or the lack of instruments appropriate for the higher level thinking skills and attitude goals found often in these institutions.

It is interesting to note that two of the items identified as major obstacles for Minnesota private institutions were not

included in the national survey. Those obstacles were the possible intrusion on teaching and learning indicated by 14% as a major obstacle and the adding to a heavy workload for staff indicated by 43% of these private institutions as a major obstacle.

An opportunity was provided on the questionnaire for the Academic Deans to write in any additional obstacles to assessment existing at their institutions that were not identified in the questionnaire. Written responses included the lack of institutional research personnel, inadequate computer facilities and the lack of central institutional research data base. Factors such as the attitude of individual faculty members and inappropriateness of available tests were repeated by the Academic Deans as barriers.

Assistance Needed and Sought

The Academic Deans were asked to indicate what type of assistance, if any, their institution would find most helpful and what source they thought could appropriately provide that assistance (see item 3, Appendix A). Again, assessment instruments and funding appeared as areas of needed assistance which was consistent with the perceived barriers addressed earlier.

A majority of the institutions had availed themselves of the opportunity to learn more about assessment through conferences devoted entirely to assessment. Of the fifteen institutions returning the survey, nine had attended at least one conference with six of the nine attending the Minnesota Conference, three

attending the National Conference in South Carolina, and one attending each a conference about the Alverno model and about the value-added model. The relationship between individuals' attending such conferences and the extent to which they have a clear idea of where to start and what to assess was mixed. It may be a situation in which the more institutions are exposed to such a complex issue, the less clear they are about the subject.

Role of Assessment

The last component of the survey completed by the Academic Deans related to various opinions about the role of assessment in higher education in general. For the purpose of comparison, nine items were duplicated from the ACE survey with only two additional items (see table 2).

There was some lack of agreement among the institutions with statements advocating the use and publication of evidence of institutional effectiveness (see items g, h and i in Table 2). While 60% approved such publication, 20% disapproved. It was interesting to note the slight differentiation on the part of these private institutions between what should be required for all institutions and what should be required for public institutions. These private institutions were somewhat more likely to agree that public institutions, rather than all institutions, should be required to publish such evidence.

Regarding the appropriate role of assessment, there were some differences between the use of assessment for accountability versus improvement and development. Although not large, there was a tendency to favor assessment for improvement and

Table 2

ACADEMIC DEAN'S AGREEMENT WITH ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Use of nationally standardized tests for purposes of student assessment risks distorting the educational process.	n	-	5	4	4	2
	[illegible]	-	33%	27%	27%	13%
	ACE%		35%		46%	
b. Student assessment should focus on broadly defined outcomes and competencies, not on easily learned skills and knowledge.	n	-	2	2	5	6
	[illegible]	-	13%	13%	33%	40%
	ACE%		14%		72%	
c. Student assessment should be closely tied to efforts to improve instruction.	n	-	-	1	5	9
	[illegible]	-	-	7%	33%	60%
	ACE%		2%		92%	
d. Student assessment should include substantial feedback to students.	n	-	-	1	10	4
	[illegible]	-	-	7%	67%	27%
	ACE%		5%		75%	
e. Results of student assessment should be linked to analyses of institutional effectiveness.	n	-	1	3	8	3
	[illegible]	-	7%	20%	53%	20%
	ACE%		1%		89%	
f. Results of student assessment should be linked to institutional planning and budgeting.	n	-	2	3	8	2
	[illegible]	-	13%	20%	53%	13%
	ACE%		5%		75%	
g. All institutions should develop and publish evidence of their effectiveness.	n	2	1	4	7	1
	[illegible]	13%	7%	27%	47%	7%
	ACE%		24%		33%	
h. As a condition of accreditation, institutions should be required to show evidence of their effectiveness.	n	2	1	2	8	2
	[illegible]	13%	7%	13%	53%	13%
	ACE%		19%		55%	
i. States should require public institutions to show evidence of their effectiveness.	n	1	2	2	8	2
	[illegible]	7%	13%	13%	53%	13%
	ACE%		35%		28%	
j. An assessment program at our institution would be valuable in assisting us to better understand our functioning and how we could improve.	n	-	-	1	9	5
	[illegible]	-	-	7%	60%	33%
k. An assessment program at our institution would be valuable in its assistance to answer questions from outside the institution about our quality and effectiveness.	n	1	-	4	9	1
	[illegible]	7%	-	27%	60%	7%

development purposes over accountability. Agreement with items c, d, and j in Table 2 are in support of improvement and development, and met with stronger agreement by the institutions more often than statements e and k which support assessment for accountability. The statements supporting assessment for development and improvement, and the percent of the institutions agreeing were as follows: assessment should be tied to improvement of institution (93%), assessment should include feedback to students (94%), and an assessment program would be valuable to institutional improvement (93%). The statements supporting assessment for accountability and the proportion agreeing were somewhat lower and were as follows: assessment should be linked to institutional effectiveness (73%), and an assessment program would be valuable for questions about the institution's quality and effectiveness (67%). The placing of more value on assessment for improvement than for accountability by these institutions is consistent with their environmental context identified earlier which indicated that one-half of the institutions were experiencing essentially no external pressure for assessment.

A comparison of these results with the 4-year institutions in the ACE survey is difficult since two important items used in the analysis did not appear in the ACE survey. However, the 4-year institutions did tend to give less support to the development and improvement factor of including feedback to students in assessment, 75% agreed versus agreement by 94% of the Minnesota private institutions; and gave more support to the

accountability factor of linking assessment to institutional effectiveness, 89% agreed versus agreement by 73% of the private institutions in this study. Minnesota's private institutions were somewhat more likely to agree that the states should require public institutions to show evidence of effectiveness. It seems reasonable that the public institutions within the 4-year institutions in the ACE survey were less likely to agree with this statement than the sample in this survey which included only private institutions.

Assessment Information Collected

As indicated earlier, Questionnaire B was sent to the individual at the institution who fulfilled the institutional research function. However, at several of these private institutions this form was also completed by the Academic Dean or other administrators because there was no individual serving in the position of institutional researcher. At these institutions the institutional research function was fulfilled by several offices.

The first area of information included in the survey that might be collected at an institution was information about students or graduates. For the purpose of this research the details about specific information gathered was of less importance than the categories of information and how it was used.

As can be seen in Appendix B, information was gathered on the basic cognition skills primarily at entrance for meeting student needs for placement and advising. Information about

knowledge and understanding and higher level skills was collected by about one-half of the institutions and, if gathered, was used just as often for program improvement as for accountability purposes.

This pattern was somewhat different for the affective domain. Information about attitudes and values was gathered at most of the private institutions and was more likely to be used for program improvement than for accountability purposes.

A comparison of the results of this study with those of the ACE study of 4-year institutions regarding the type of information collected is difficult since there were few common items. However, it again appeared that the private institutions in this study concentrated more of their information collection efforts on improvement and development than on accountability. The private institutions collected many of the measures of college effectiveness at the same level as the ACE 4-year colleges, e.g., proportion going for further education and ratings by graduates. However, the private institutions were much more likely than the 4-year ACE institutions to collect information about student learning, e.g., general education knowledge and attainment of critical thinking skills.

Measures identified by Astin as being more traditional and inappropriate as measures of quality are in evidence in the information collected by these institutions. Those measures include graduation rates, enrollment in graduate or professional schools and job placement. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of institutions in this study collected and

used information about job placement and satisfaction with education less for the purpose of accountability and more for the purpose of program improvement.

The second area of information included in the survey that might be collected by an institution was information about the other institutional resources of personnel, programs and facilities. In these areas there was clearly greater assessment activity than in the areas relating to students, which may be related to the past focus in higher education on efficiency. The information about personnel and facilities was used for both improvement and accountability/administrative decisions. There was only a slight tendency to use program information for improvement purposes rather than for accountability.

Summary and Implications

The results of this survey indicated that about one-half of the private institutions in Minnesota experienced some but not great pressure from their external environment while the remaining institutions have felt essentially no pressure. This situation that may change as institutions and their publics increase in their awareness and understanding of assessment. The Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), identified both practical and political considerations of the need for assessment in private institutions in a meeting held last spring. They concluded that

> While public institutions are the first targets, we may not be far behind. In any event, it would not help our competitive position to find that the public sector is able to document quality while we are unable to respond in

> kind. Finally, if we wish to take part in shaping what may be an inevitable set of new requirements for higher education, we cannot stay on the sidelines and let others structure the discussion, and worse, decide what the requirements should be (p.4, 1986).

This political argument can be extended to propose that private institutions cannot remain at the sidelines until requirements are established for additional reasons. Even if private institutions were never to be directly affected by requirements, it seems reasonable to assume that inappropriate assessment imposed on the public institutions would have a detrimental effect on all. Therefore, it would behoove all institutions, public and private, to become informed and take an active role in helping shape the assessment environment for higher education institutions.

Within the obstacles identified by the Academic Deans as being among the greatest obstacles to assessment were two that can be considered an indication of a healthy awareness. Those obstacles were the fears about possible intrusion of assessment on teaching and learning, and the fear of misuse of assessment results. These seem to be well justified fears given some of the current, well publicized assessment plans. These identified caveats can serve as caveats for those planning and conducting assessments at their institutions.

Other identified obstacles were related to limited resources of time, money and technology. These obstacles are not so easily removed but need not be as great as they are currently. Because private institutions share many characteristics, such institutions would clearly benefit from cooperation. Cooperative

efforts among the private institutions could increase their understanding of assessment and the assessment issues as applied in their institutional type. Sharing of thoughts, plans and perhaps even expertise to address assessment is not new and is currently being utilized by the University of Minnesota, whose Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, John Wallace, organized a consortium of major research universities to address the assessment issue and to cooperate in assessment planning and activities. Perhaps these private institutions do not need a new structure but to use the current consortiums more effectively.

The somewhat greater support, as reflected in the Deans' responses, for use of assessment for improvement purposes over accountability indicates that private institutions' efforts to maintain or improve quality may occupy a more important role for their institutions. This priority was also reflected in the results of the questionnaire sent to institutional research personnel which indicated that there was significant student assessment for program development purposes. There was also a very high level of assessment for the purposes of improvement that takes place with the personnel, academic and other programs and facilities that all play an important role in student growth. It is interesting to note that this assessment of personnel, facilities and programs in addition to students, was exactly the type of assessment that was advocated in an article by Astin (1982). In that article he acknowledged that value added was ideal but not very practical. When confronted about the disparity between that article and his more recent writings he

explained by saying he had written the article in a moment of despair that value added concept would ever become popular (1985). That, however, does not weaken his arguments found in the article. It is an article that argues for using evidence of assessments for improvement as indicators of quality.

It seems unfortunate that the focus of the assessment literature has been on accountability and outcomes, i.e., providing evidence that the educational process was effective based on some standard. Those who limit assessment to this summative approach will find that it is very expensive and provides little direction for improvement. The use of a formative approach, i.e., for decision making for the purpose of development and or improvement, is seldom found in the literature. The importance of using both types was mentioned in a brief article by Russell Edgerton, President, America Association of Higher Education who wrote, "The real question is not whether assessment will arrive, but what shape it will take. Will we have simply a new overlay of standardized tests, or the kind of assessment that really improves learning? Accountability is important, but the problem at the undergraduate level is not so much documenting student performance but improving it (p.11, 1986)."

The attitude about assessment and the role assessment in the private institutions included in this survey seem to be consistent with Edgerton's position. However, this role of assessment may be unique to the context of private institutions in similar state contexts and may not be so easily achieved in an

area with a different educational climate or within the context of the public institutions.

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February 1987

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Completed by Academic Dean

SURVEY ON THE STATUS OF ASSESSMENT IN MINNESOTA

Directions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number corresponding to the answer that applies.

1. Please indicate which of the following has occurred at your institution within the last two years regarding the issues of assessment and the quality of education.

	Yes	Planned	No	Don't know
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
1. Discussion				
a. with members of the board/trustees/regents	13 (87%)	- (%)	2 (13%)	-
b. among senior administrators	15(100%)	- (%)	- (%)	-
c. in institutional faculty meetings	12 (86%)	2 (14%)	- (%)	-
d. in some academic departments	15(100%)	- (%)	- (%)	-
e. in some administrative departments	15(100%)	- (%)	- (%)	-
f. in specially convened institutional meetings	7 (50%)	- (%)	7 (50%)	-
g. with outside consultants	11 (73%)	- (%)	4 (27%)	-
2. Establishment of a new task force/committee or assignment of an existing committee to address the issues of assessment and quality of undergraduate education.	9 (64%)	2 (14%)	3 (21%)	-
3. Have established an assessment plan	8 (53%)	4 (27%)	3 (20%)	-

2. For each of the following, please indicate -
   A. to what extent the condition exists at your institution and
   B. given that condition, to what extent it serves as an obstacle to establishing/using an assessment program at your institution.

	Extent of Condition at Your Institution					Condition as an Obstacle to Assessment at Your Institut		
	Essentially not at all	A little	Some-what	Much	Exten-sive	Not an obstacle	Minor obstacle	Major obstacle
a. Awareness of assessment issues on the part of key administrators.	-	-	5	5	5	12	2	-
	-	-	33%	33%	33%	86%	14%	-
b. Awareness of assessment issues on the part of key faculty/faculty committees.	-	-	5	6	4	9	5	-
	-	-	33%	40%	27%	64%	36%	-
c. Pressure from the external environment (public, board members/regents, etc.) for assessment.	7	2	4	1	1	13	1	-
	47%	13%	27%	7%	7%	93%	7%	-
d. A clear sense of how to begin an assessment program.	-	1	6	4	4	7	7	-
	-	7%	40%	27%	27%	50%	50%	-
e. A clear sense of what to evaluate.	-	-	7	5	3	6	8	-
	-	-	47%	33%	20%	43%	57%	-
f. General administrative support of the concept of assessment.	-	-	2	7	6	14	-	-
	-	-	13%	47%	40%	100%	-	-
g. General faculty support of the concept of assessment.	-	-	9	5	1	7	6	-
	-	-	60%	33%	7%	54%	46%	-
h. A perception that students would be unhappy with new forms of assessment.	7	3	4	-	-	8	6	-
	50%	21%	29%	-	-	57%	43%	-
i. Fear about possible intrusion of assessment on teaching/learning activities.	2	6	5	2	-	4	8	2
	13%	40%	33%	13%	-	29%	57%	14%
j. The opinion that assessment may be inappropriate for the insitution's curriculum.	8	3	4	-	-	9	4	-
	53%	20%	27%	-	-	69%	31%	-
k. Fear about misuse of assessment results.	4	5	5	1	-	5	6	2
	27%	33%	33%	7%	-	39%	46%	15%
l. Perceived inadequacy of available evaluation instruments.	-	3	6	5	1	-	7	7
	-	20%	40%	33%	7%	-	50%	50%
m. Availability of sufficient funds to develop assessment program.	4	3	5	2	1	5	4	4
	27%	20%	33%	13%	7%	39%	31%	31%
n. Expertise at institution to develop assessment procedures.	-	-	3	9	3	9	5	-
	-	-	20%	60%	20%	64%	36%	-
o. Expertise at institution to assist in interpreting and utilizing results.	-	2	2	8	3	10	4	-
	-	13%	13%	53%	20%	71%	29%	-
p. A perception that assessment would add to an already heavy workload for staff.	1	6	3	2	3	1	7	6
	7%	40%	20%	13%	20%	7%	50%	43%

3. a. What, if any, are additional obstacles to assessment at your institution that were not identified in question 2 on page 1? What opportunities for assessment exist at your institution?

Obstacles

2 Insufficient computer facilities/data base
2 No Institutional Researcher
1 Inappropriate instruments
1 Cumbersome committee process

b. To address the obstacles to assessment at your institution, please indicate what type of assistance, if any, your institution would find most helpful and which specific group you think could appropriately provide that assistance.

n	Type of assistance most helpful (specify)	Appropriate source of assistance (check): Other institutions	State Legislature	Institutional consortiums	State agencies	No specific group in mind
6	Funding	-	3	1	1	2
3	Expertise/consultants	2	-	2	-	1
2	Instruments	2	-	2	-	-
2	Workshops/conferences	1	2	2	1	-
1	Information about models used by other inst.	-	-	1	-	-
1	Peers group norms	1	-	1	1	-
1	Instruments (development)	-	1	-	-	-
1	Information through mailings	1	1	1	1	-

4. Do you know of individuals in your institution who have attended conferences/workshops devoted entirely to assessment (e.g., National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education Conference held in South Carolina in October 1985, Assessment in Higher Education Conference at the University of Minnesota in July 1986)?

	n	%	
1. Yes	9	64%	If yes, please specify conference(s). Alverno College Assessment Procedures, Wisc. (n=1), Value Added Learning, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. (n=1), National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education, S.C. (n=3), Assessment in Higher Education, U. of Minn. (n=6)
2. No	5	36%	

5. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Use of nationally standardized tests for purposes of student assessment risks distorting the educational process.	n	-	5	4	4	3
	%	-	33%	27%	27%	13%
b. Student assessment should focus on broadly defined outcomes and competencies, not on easily learned skills and knowledge.	n	-	2	2	5	6
	%	-	13%	13%	33%	40%
c. Student assessment should be closely tied to efforts to improve instruction.	n	-	-	1	5	9
	%	-	-	7%	33%	60%
d. Student assessment should include substantial feedback to students.	n	-	-	1	10	4
	%	-	-	7%	67%	27%
e. Results of student assessment should be linked to analyses of institutional effectiveness.	n	-	1	3	8	3
	%	-	7%	20%	53%	20%
f. Results of student assessment should be linked to institutional planning and budgeting.	n	-	2	3	8	2
	%	-	13%	20%	53%	13%
g. All institutions should develop and publish evidence of their effectiveness.	n	2	1	4	7	1
	%	13%	7%	27%	47%	7%
h. As a condition of accreditation, institutions should be required to show evidence of their effectiveness.	n	2	1	2	8	2
	%	13%	7%	13%	53%	13%
i. States should require public institutions to show evidence of their effectiveness.	n	1	2	2	8	2
	%	7%	13%	13%	53%	13%
j. An assessment program at our institution would be valuable in assisting us to better understand our functioning and how we could improve.	n	-	-	1	9	5
	%	-	-	7%	60%	33%
k. An assessment program at our institution would be valuable in its assistance to answer questions from outside the institution about our quality and effectiveness.	n	1	-	4	9	1
	%	7%	-	27%	60%	7%

6. Other comments about assessment or quality of education issues:

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Thank you for your assistance

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Completed by Institutional Researcher

SURVEY ON THE STATUS OF ASSESSMENT IN MINNESOTA

Directions: Please answer the following questions by circling the number corresponding to the answer that applies.

1. Listed below are many types of information about students/graduates, each of which may be more appropriate for some institutions than for others. Please indicate which, if any, have been collected at some time during the last five years and for what purpose(s) (indicate as many purposes as apply).

	Has information been collected within last five years?				If yes, indicate as many purposes as apply.			
	Yes, at entrance	Yes, during process	Yes, at exit	No	Program improvement	Meet student needs (e.g., placement, advising)	Account-ability	Do kn pu
A. Areas of growth/development								
1. Basic cognitive skills	13	2	2	1	4	12	3	
(a) mathematical skills	13	2	2	1	4	12	3	
(b) English composition/communication	13	4	3	-	5	11	4	
(c) reading	6	3	2	5	3	7	2	
(d) other (specify _____)	1	-	2	2	1	1	1	
2. Knowledge/understanding								
(a) general education subjects (e.g., history, humanities, science)	3	2	5	5	6 5	3 4	5 3	
(b) other specific content areas (e.g., area of major)	1	2	4	7	5	4	3	
(c) technical subjects	2	1	3	8	4	3	2	
(d) other (specify _____)	2	-	2	4	2	2	1	
3. Higher level skills								
(a) critical thinking	2	2	3	7	5	2	4	
(b) problem solving	2	2	3	7	5	2	4	
(c) communication(e.g., to persuade)	2	2	3	7	5	2	2	
(d) technical skills	1	1	2	9	3	2	2	
(e) other (specify _____)	1	-	1	4	1	-	1	
4. Affective understanding/skills								
(a) attitudes	7	4	4	3	9	4	3	
(b) values	6	4	4	3	8	3	3	
(c) human relations/leadership skills	1	4	2	6	4	2	2	
(d) other (specify _____)	1	-	1	3	1	-	1	
B. Student Progress								
1. Withdrawals from courses		5	3	7	3	3	4	
2. Repeats of courses		4	3	7	3	2	3	
3. Graduation rates			14	-	7	4	11	
4. Other (specify _____)		-	1	-	1	1	1	
C. General outcomes of graduates			Yes	No				
1. Enrollment in graduate/professional school			13	1	6		9	
2. Additional earned degrees(e.g., Diplomas, Associate, Bachelors)			7	6	5		4	
3. Advanced earned degrees (e.g., M.A., Ph.D.)			7	5	5		4	
4. Professional attainment			9	2	7		6	
5. Job Placement			13	-	11		9	
6. Honors and other achievements			6	7	3		3	
7. Employer evaluation of job performance			2	8	3		3	
8. Contribution to community			2	8	1		1	
9. Indices of alumni giving			11	2	6		4	
10. General satisfaction with education, etc.			11	2	10		6	
11. Other (specify _____)			-	1	-		-	

2. Which of the following aspects are evaluated at your institution and for what purpose(s) (indicate either or both purposes as applicable)?

Aspect of Institution	Has an evaluation been conducted?			If yes, indicate as many purposes as apply.	
	Yes, annually	Yes, at least once in last 5 years	No	Development/ Improvement	Accountability/ Administrative decisions
	n	n	n	n	n
a. Personnel					
(1) Administration	7	5	1	10	10
(2) Faculty					
(a) by peers	7	7	-	12	10
(b) by students/graduates	9	3	-	12	10
(c) by administrators	4	6	1	9	9
b. Programs					
(1) Department programs	-	13	-	12	8
(2) Other academic programs (e.g., internships, study abroad)	3	8	2	11	7
(3) Student development and support programs/services (availability, quality, utilization, etc.) (specify _____)	1	11	-	13	8
c. Facilities (e.g., buildings, spaces for classes, studying, eating) (availability, quality, utilization, etc.) (specify _____)	4	9	-	9	11
d. Other (specify _____)	1	-	1	1	1